

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

May 3, 2010

President Obama on Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 2010	1
Statement by President Obama on Immigration Reform	1
2010 World Expo Aims to Strengthens U.S.-China Ties	2
Conference Seeks to Strengthen Nuclear Nonproliferation	3
Report Finds Press Freedoms Declining Worldwide.....	4
A Nation Mourns Human Rights Champion Dorothy Height	5

President Obama on Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 2010

U.S. honors Americans who trace their ancestry to Asia and Pacific Islands

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary
April 30, 2010

ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER
HERITAGE MONTH, 2010 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

For centuries, America's story has been tied to the Pacific. Generations of brave men and women have crossed this vast ocean, seeking better lives and opportunities, and weaving their rich heritage into our cultural tapestry. During Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, we celebrate the immeasurable contributions these diverse peoples have made to our Nation.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have shared common struggles throughout their histories in America - including efforts to overcome racial, social, and religious discrimination. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay, a milestone that reminds us of an unjust time in our history. For three decades, immigrants from across the Pacific arrived at Angel Island, where they were subject to harsh interrogations and exams, and confined in crowded, unsanitary barracks. Many who were not turned back by racially prejudiced immigration laws endured hardship, injustice, and deplorable conditions as miners, railroad builders, and farm workers.

Despite these obstacles, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have persevered and flourished, achieving success in every sector of American life. They stood shoulder to shoulder with their fellow citizens during the civil rights movement; they have served proudly in our Armed Forces; and they have prospered as leaders in business, academia, and public service.

This month, as we honor all Americans who trace their ancestry to Asia and the Pacific Islands, we must acknowledge the challenges they still face. Today, many Asian American and Pacific Islander families experience unemployment and poverty, as well as significant education and health disparities. They are at high risk for diabetes and hepatitis, and the number of diagnoses for HIV/AIDS has increased in recent years.

We must recognize and properly address these critical concerns so all Americans can reach their full potential.

That is why my Administration reestablished both the White House Initiative and the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). These partnerships include leaders from across our Government and the AAPI community, dedicated to improving the quality of life and opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are a vast and diverse community, some native to the United States, hailing from Hawaii and our Pacific Island territories. Others trace their heritage to dozens of countries. All are treasured citizens who enrich our Nation in countless ways, and help fulfill the promise of the American dream which has drawn so many to our shores.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2010, as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. I call upon all Americans to learn more about the history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fourth.

BARACK OBAMA

Statement by President Obama on Immigration Reform

Says Senate's proposal is important step to fix U.S. immigration

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
April 29, 2010

Statement by the President on Senate Proposal Outlined Today to Fix Our Nation's Broken Immigration System

"It is the federal government's responsibility to enforce the law and secure our borders, as well as to set clear rules and priorities for future immigration. The continued failure of the federal government to fix the broken immigration system will leave the door open to a patchwork of actions at the state and local level that are inconsistent and as we have seen recently, often misguided.

The proposal outlined today in the Senate is a very important step in the process of fixing our nation's broken immigration system. I am especially pleased to see that this detailed outline is consistent with the bipartisan

framework presented by Senators Chuck Schumer and Lindsey Graham last month, and is grounded in the principles of responsibility and accountability.

What has become increasingly clear is that we can no longer wait to fix our broken immigration system, which Democrats and Republicans alike agree doesn't work. It's unacceptable to have 11 million people in the United States who are living here illegally and outside of the system. I have repeatedly said that there are some essential components that must be in immigration legislation. It must call for stronger border security measures, tougher penalties for employers who hire illegal immigrants and clearer rules for controlling future immigration. And it must require those who are here illegally to get right with the law, pay penalties and taxes, learn English, pass criminal background checks and admit responsibility before they are allowed to get in line and eventually earn citizenship. The outline presented today includes many of these elements. The next critical step is to iron out the details of a bill. We welcome that discussion, and my Administration will play an active role in engaging partners on both sides of the aisle to work toward a bipartisan solution that is based on the fundamental concept of accountability that the American people expect and deserve."

2010 World Expo Aims to Strengthen U.S.-China Ties

Partnerships build anticipation for USA pavilion in Shanghai

By Andrew Malandrino
Staff Writer

Washington – The largest-world's exposition in history is set to begin on May 1 in Shanghai, a city U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton calls "one of the most dynamic and cosmopolitan cities in the world."

The theme of the expo, the first held in China, is "Better City, Better Life." This reflects a U.N. estimate that nearly 55 percent of the world's people live in cities, an increase of 53 percent since 1800. The expo, which occupies approximately five square kilometers (two square miles) in downtown Shanghai, features pavilions from more than 240 countries, international organizations and corporations. Organizers expect more than 70 million people to attend the expo, which closes on October 31.

Speaking at the State Department on April 30 during a special event to celebrate the expo's opening, Clinton said, "I just really believe that the people-to-people connections that we are trying to promote are the base of a long, lasting relationship."

Joining the opening event via telephone from Shanghai, U.S. Ambassador to China John Huntsman said U.S.-China cooperation on the expo "will be building ... a very lasting and enduring bridge across the Pacific." Millions

of young people will be exposed to who Americans really are, said Huntsman.

The United States has a long history of participating in world expositions. At London's 1851 expo, the first modern world's fair, the United States was one of 28 participating countries. President Obama's hometown of Chicago hosted two world fairs: the 1893 expo introduced the Ferris wheel, and Major League Baseball played its first All-Star game in conjunction with the 1933 expo.

Speaking at a town hall event in Shanghai, China, November 16, 2009, President Obama said the expos "ended up being tremendous boosts for [Chicago]," and he is "sure the same thing will happen here in Shanghai."

AN AMERICAN SHOWCASE

At the April 30 event, Ambassador Elizabeth Bagley, the State Department's special representative for global partnerships, said the U.S. pavilion "will showcase the best America has to offer."

With Obama in Shanghai on November 16, 2009, Clinton said the "USA pavilion will showcase American innovation [and] it will demonstrate the kind of values that America holds dear — freedom, diversity, teamwork, creativity." The pavilion's design resembles the open wings of an eagle, welcoming its visitors.

More Chinese are expected to visit the USA pavilion in six months than would visit the entire U.S. mission in 20 years, said Pavilion Commissioner-General José Villareal, who joined the April 30 event via videoconference. Many of those guests will be guided by Mandarin-speaking student ambassadors from the United States.

The U.S. pavilion's theme is "Rising to the Challenge." It reflects the American spirit of perseverance, innovation and community-building. There are five subthemes: diversity and change, innovation, technology, sustainability and transformation, and teamwork and partnerships.

Clinton closely worked with China and U.S. private-sector sponsors to make possible U.S. participation in the expo. U.S. law prohibits taxpayer funds from being used for world expo pavilions. Phillip and Rebecca Branham, president and co-founder, of sponsor B&L Group, a wholly foreign-owned enterprise doing engineering and consulting work in China since 1997, said their company supervised the U.S. pavilion's engineering and infrastructure.

Joining the April 30 event, Phillip Branham told America.gov the entire B&L staff is "thrilled and happy" to have helped the U.S. pavilion become a reality. He

echoed Clinton's remarks, saying, "it's the people-to-people friendships" that get things done. "Good relations," he said, "start with the people on the ground."

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

U.S. participation in the expo "was a multilayered partnership. It was a partnership between China and the United States, between the United States government and many of our great companies and corporations," said Clinton April 30.

In separate visits to China since entering office, Clinton and U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke spoke about the close relationship between the United States and China, and the importance of the world expo.

In a letter for the July 2009 groundbreaking ceremony for the U.S. pavilion, Clinton wrote, "The Shanghai Expo represents all that the nations of the world can accomplish when they work together, the global challenges they can meet through collective action, and the progress they can achieve through international cooperation."

Locke, a Chinese American, said in July 2009, "Today, [the United States] is more interdependent with China than at any point in the last 30 years." At the groundbreaking for the U.S. pavilion in Shanghai on July 17, 2009, Locke said, "the Obama administration is committed to continue to build our relationship with China and to enhance the friendship between the people of America and China."

Cultural exchanges play a big part in that friendship. Villarreal writes on the pavilion's website that the State Department sponsored several U.S. musical acts representing jazz, hip-hop, urban and classical influences to perform during the expo. There also will be daily "Dance-America!" performances at the U.S. pavilion.

The pavilion also underscores the elements that united people across cultures and across borders.

"We are bound by our common humanity and our shared curiosity," President Obama says in a recorded welcome to visitors. "This includes the hopes we share with the people of China and people around the world to work together."

Conference Seeks to Strengthen Nuclear Nonproliferation

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is approaching the monthlong review conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) by reaffirming that the

basic bargain between nuclear and non-nuclear armed states remains sound, and hopes to strengthen it even if a full consensus among the 189 participants cannot realistically be achieved in May, Obama administration officials said April 30.

The conference, which opens May 3 in New York, follows an intensive focus by the Obama administration in April on global nuclear nonproliferation efforts. This focus resulted in the United States and Russia agreeing to substantial reductions to their nuclear arsenals under the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) April 8, the United States unveiling a revised Nuclear Posture Review April 6, which reduces the role of nuclear weapons in its national security strategy, and the April 12-13 Nuclear Security Summit, where countries to secure all loose nuclear materials by 2014.

Speaking in Washington April 30, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice repeated President Obama's April 2009 assessment that the "basic bargain [of the treaty] is sound: Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy."

The goal of the conference is to strengthen the treaty's "three pillars" of disarmament, nonproliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, Rice said.

It is both an opportunity for signatories to "reaffirm our commitment to the importance of the treaty," and to "undertake a constructive, balanced review of where things stand and to assess what steps we can take together to strengthen the treaty," she said.

The participants will be focusing on how to improve treaty compliance and to increase support for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), emphasizing the importance of IAEA safeguards to provide assurances that all signatories are complying with their NPT obligations, Rice said.

"NPT violations are corrosive. If one country in a region violates the NPT, other countries are forced to re-evaluate their security needs and military decisions. In the end, a single violator can potentially undercut long-standing efforts to achieve universal adherence to the NPT," she said.

In addition, the United States hopes to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy by "expanding cooperation to help developing countries build their capacities," which can help advance their economic, agricultural and medical development, she said.

Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and

Disarmament Ellen Tauscher said the United States and other countries “very much want to move to consensus” on how to strengthen the NPT. “[B]ut at the end, if there is not consensus because of the activities of some outliers, we believe that we still will be able to have great agreement on those three central pillars and moving forward,” she said.

Susan Burk, who is President Obama’s special representative on nuclear nonproliferation, added that to achieve the president’s vision, all of the parties will need to move together and set aside the “stale debates and perspectives that have too often led to gridlock.”

“We’re looking forward to working with our treaty partners to try to identify areas where agreement on concrete measures to reinforce the global nuclear nonproliferation regime can be reached now, and on areas where further work and deliberation are needed so that agreement might be possible in the future,” Burk said.

Delegations are also looking to ensure that countries that violate the NPT and then withdraw from it to evade penalties will still be held accountable for their violations, Burk said.

Tauscher said the United States “has always stood for the universality of the NPT,” and wants all states to accede to the agreement. Asked about Israel’s reported nuclear activities, she reaffirmed U.S. support for the United Nations’ 1995 resolution calling for the Middle East to be a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

That resolution calls for a regional conference on disarmament. However, Tauscher said that for the conference to be meaningful and have a realistic chance of success, all regional states must participate. This “would be unlikely unless there is a comprehensive peace plan that is being accepted and worked on,” she said.

“But at the same time, this is something that the region has to embrace,” and it should do so “at the right time, when all parties can participate,” Tauscher said.

Report Finds Press Freedoms Declining Worldwide

Watchdog group says restrictions on the press are intensifying
By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Freedom of the press declined in almost every region of the world in 2009, according to a study released April 29 by Freedom House, an international nongovernmental organization that researches and monitors democratic freedoms around the world.

The report, *Freedom of the Press 2010: A Global Survey of Media Independence*, found that press freedom declined

for the eighth consecutive year, and only one in six people lives in a country with genuinely free media.

According to Freedom House, the improvement in press freedom following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in 1989 has stalled, and in some cases reversed in the last 10 years. At the same time, there has been a dramatic expansion of online media as well as cable and satellite television. With the plethora of communication possibilities, total control over news and information has become more difficult — a situation many repressive regimes are working hard to overcome. Freedom House found that 2009 was notable for intensified efforts by authoritarian regimes to place restrictions on all conduits for news and information.

The Internet and new media have become the new battlegrounds for government control. Repressive governments are attempting to restrict Internet freedom with lawsuits, direct censorship, content manipulation and physical harassment of bloggers, the report says. The Chinese government, especially, has introduced several new methods of Internet censorship and has remained “a global leader in the jailing of journalists,” according to the Freedom House report.

Unpunished attacks against journalists encourage more violence against journalists in countries where there is weak rule of law, inadequate judicial institutions and a lack of political will to uphold free media, the report says. Governments remain unwilling to reform or eliminate laws used to punish journalists for reasons such as “inciting hatred,” commenting on “sensitive topics,” “blasphemy” or “endangering national security,” Freedom House says. Political upheaval makes journalists prime targets for restrictions and threats from both sides of a conflict, according to the study.

The globalization of censorship represents a growing threat to freedoms of expression and the press, Freedom House says. “Libel tourism,” in which plaintiffs shop around for jurisdictions in which they can count on favorable outcomes, has become a serious problem in some areas of the world. For example, foreign business magnates, princes and other powerful individuals have “increasingly turned to the British court system to quash critical research or commentary,” according to the Freedom House study.

Looking at the world’s regions, Freedom House found that only 48 percent of the countries in the Americas could be rated as having a completely free media. Cuba and Venezuela were deemed to have “not free” media environments.

The Asia-Pacific region was the one bright spot found by the study, even though the region is home to well-known,

media-repressing regimes such as North Korea and Burma. Only 12 countries and territories are rated as “not free,” according to Freedom House. The Asia-Pacific region as a whole exhibited “a relatively high level of press freedom,” the study says. A drop in physical attacks and harassment has led to less self-censorship by the media in countries such as Indonesia.

Central and Eastern Europe, along with the countries of the former Soviet Union, underwent modest decline or no change. Russia remained among the world’s more repressive and dangerous media environments. Kyrgyzstan’s media freedom score fell; but Ukraine, Armenia and Moldova showed slight improvement.

In the Middle East, Iran showed the region’s biggest decline of the year due to the suppression of journalists in the wake of the June 2009 presidential election. Iraq saw some improvement for free media as political bias declined and attacks on journalists decreased, the study says.

In Africa, Freedom House found significant declines in the level of press freedom. For the first time since 1990, no country in southern Africa was scored as “free.” In a surprising status change, South Africa and Namibia both dropped from “free” to “partly free” countries. Freedom House cited slight improvements, however, in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Sudan and Mauritania.

Freedom House’s rankings for countries in Western Europe remained fairly stable. But, the report says, “the United Kingdom remains a concern due to its expansive libel laws.”

A Nation Mourns Human Rights Champion Dorothy Height

Average Americans join presidents in celebrating a life of social activism

Washington — Dorothy Height, known as the godmother of the American civil rights movement, dedicated her life to securing equal rights and equal opportunity for all, regardless of race or gender.

That life was celebrated in a series of memorial services that culminated in a funeral at Washington’s National Cathedral, with a eulogy from America’s first African-American president.

President Obama reminded those attending — religious and secular leaders, Height’s family and friends, and 700 admirers from the general public who began lining up for the coveted tickets before dawn — that Height’s contributions stretched beyond equal rights for African Americans and extended past U.S. borders.

“We remember her not solely for all she did during the civil rights movement,” Obama said. “We remember her for all she did over a lifetime, behind the scenes, to broaden the movement’s reach, to shine a light on stable families and tight-knit communities. To make us see the drive for civil rights and women’s rights not as a separate struggle, but as part of a larger movement to secure the rights of all humanity, regardless of gender, regardless of race, regardless of ethnicity.”

Height championed that movement at an early age, in a time and a place that tended to stifle the voices of those who were young, or black or female. Yet somehow a young black woman found ways to make herself heard, and not just in the United States.

CITIZEN OF WORLD

In 1937, Height organized the United Christian Youth Movement of North America and served as its vice president, a post that led to her inclusion in the 10-member American youth delegation to the Oxford, England, World Conference on Life and Work.

That experience helped garner Height a 1938 invitation from first lady Eleanor Roosevelt to join a small group of young people planning and preparing for the upcoming World Youth Conference at Vassar College in New York’s Hudson River Valley. Height would later assist Roosevelt as she drafted the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a 1948 document that preceded the U.S. Civil Rights Act by nearly two decades.

As the U.S. civil rights movement gained momentum in the 1950s, Height insisted on a voice in its leadership, but continued her international engagement and her determination to move the women’s rights agenda beyond the borders of the United States.

From 1947 to 1956, Height was the national president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (DST), a private, nonprofit organization that describes itself as sisterhood of more than 200,000 women educated at predominantly black universities who are dedicated to helping local communities throughout the world. The organization now has more than 900 chapters in the United States, Great Britain, Japan, Germany, the Virgin Islands, Bermuda, the Bahamas and the Republic of Korea.

In 1948, while attending a meeting of the Congress of Women in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Height established a DST chapter there, the first outside the United States. Under Height’s leadership, DST funded a maternity ward in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1955.

Height taught in 1952 at the University of Delhi, India, in the Delhi School of Social Work founded by the YWCAs

of India, Burma and Ceylon. In South Asia, she built a reputation for internationalism and humanitarianism, and traveled extensively to study and expand the work of the YWCA.

In 1958, she was one of a 35-member delegation to the Town Meeting of the World, a special people-to-people mission to five Latin American countries, and then went on to study the training needs of women's organizations in five West African countries (Liberia, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Nigeria).

"As the longtime head of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), Dr. Height's tireless effort to work for women's rights worldwide is apparent in many African nations," according to the TransAfrica Forum, a Washington-based nongovernmental organization that aims to foster a closer alliance among the African diaspora through activities that promote political awareness and involvement in foreign affairs.

Calling her "one of the African World's most noted liberators," the organization praised Height for standing "on the front lines ... to fight apartheid in South Africa and human injustice in Haiti" and support Nigerians' fight against the military regime of Sani Abacha.

In 1975, Height participated in the Tribunal at the International Women's Year Conference of the United Nations in Mexico City, where a grant by the U.S. Agency for International Development allowed the NCNW to host a conference within the conference for women from the Americas and the Caribbean. Following that meeting, 50 conference attendees accepted an NCNW invitation to visit women in rural Mississippi to share their stories and experiences.

The U.S. Information Agency supported a 1977 lecture tour by Height to South Africa, a trip she began by addressing the National Convention of the Black Women's Federation of South Africa near Johannesburg. Nearly a quarter century later, at an age when most people would struggle with a trip to the local market, Height was again in Africa, this time in Durban, South Africa, for the 2001 U.N. Summit on Racism.

Height's own words emphasize her legacy does not belong to one race, one gender or one nation.

"I want to be remembered as someone who used herself and anything she could touch to work for justice and freedom," she said. "I want to be remembered as someone who tried."

(Preceding items distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://america.gov>)